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Faith Communities Today (FACT)

From January 1 through March 31, 2015, all United Church of Christ congregations are invited to participate in a national study of religious life in America. It is the fifth such survey in the Faith Communities Today (FACT) series, begun in the year 2000, which provides religious leaders of all traditions critical planning information about the changing nature of congregational life and how to respond effectively. Information and findings from the FACT surveys are provided online freely at www.faithcommunitiestoday.org , and UCC results from the FACT 2010 Survey can be found at www.ucc.org/evangelism_fact_f-a-c-t .

This survey should be completed by your pastor, a staff member, church administrator, or well-informed lay leader. If any of the questions do not apply to your congregation, please feel free to check the "Does not apply" response or to skip item.

The survey is available online at www.ucc.org/factsurvey and requires your church's official church ID number which is also used to complete annual online Yearbook reporting (this number can be obtained from your Conference or Association and is also found in the UCC Yearbook or Access UCC.

Responses about each individual congregation are completely confidential and will contribute to a better understanding of our local churches and how they do ministry. ***Please complete this survey by March 31, 2015.*** Aggregate results will be shared online at www.ucc.org and on the Faith Communities Today website in coming months.

Reports Due!

Time is running out for the reporting of Yearbook statistics for the past year! The UCC Data Hub is open and ready for your

submission. Please get your information in by this coming Monday, March 9th! Churches are responsible for inputting their information.

To enter your church's information visit the national UCC website by clicking here. Included on the page are tips for using the Data Hub and instructional videos.

If you have any questions about inputting information into the Data Hub, please contact Gerri Hudson at 404-607-1993 ext. 0 or ghudson@secucc.org and she will be able to help you with your issues.

We are beginning a process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2015. Each month, we will publish a weekly list for the month and post them weekly on our Facebook page. We encourage you to include these prayers requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Click here to download the March and April prayer list

Click here to download the prayer list for all of 2015

Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC and Uplands Village in Pleasant Hill, Tennessee who are still recovering from winter weather. Some residents have been without power for over a week. Prayers for the staff of Uplands Village who have been providing for the needs of Upland residents who have had no power, heat, or capability to prepare meals.

Rev. Dr. Marvin Morgan whose brother, Minister William E. Morgan, died late February. A Celebration of Life was held February 24 in Zebulon, North Carolina.

Condolences for the family of Rev. Ted Braun and Donna Braun. Ted died February 23 and Donna died March 4. Prayers also for the Uplands Village community in Pleasant Hill, Tennessee where the Brauns were long-time residents. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Donations can be made to support the work of the Shalom Center for Continuing Education at PO Box 167, Pleasant Hill, TN 38578.

Rev. Laurie Hill and Fairfield Glade Community Church, Fairfield Glade, Tennessee. Rev. Hill will be installed on March 8.

Rev. Rick Diekmann has announced his resignation from Brookemeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee. He will serve through Easter Sunday.

Pilgrim Congregational UCC in Chattanooga, Tennessee and Rev. Dr. Marvin Morgan who began his interim ministry on March 2.

Churches in transition-Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery Alabama; Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia; Pilgrim UCC, Birmingham Alabama; Church of the Savior, Alpharetta Georgia; United Church, Cookeville Tennessee; Decatur UCC, Decatur Georgia; Peace Congregational UCC, Clemson South Carolina; Pensacola UCC, Pensacola Florida; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga Tennessee, Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee.

Please also pray for Kelly Gissendaner and her family, along with Rev. Sally Purvis and others from Central Congregational Church in Atlanta, who are providing pastoral support.

Jottings from June

WITNESS

Witness is a word that is not widely used in the United Church of Christ. It may be a bit more prevalent here in the South where we have strong roots of testimony and evangelism. As I read through the lectionary for Lent, I am becoming more aware that all of the activities of Jesus and the disciples were a witness to God's love for the world and the power of the Holy Spirit to change all things through the faith of the one sent to redeem all creation.

This witness has been especially weighing on my heart, mind, and prayers as current events unfold around us. My daily prayers have included those who are bearing witness in Selma on the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday including churches from Birmingham and Atlanta and leaders from Chicago Theological Institute. My daily prayers have included the life of Kelly Gissandaner as she continues to request a reprieve for her pending execution and the 500 clergy who signed a letter to Georgia governor, Nathan Deal to ask for clemency. And for all the concerned people who are gathering and rallying and holding services to testify to the injustice of the death penalty and to honor the life of a woman who has become a witness to the redemptive power of faith.

Many of our churches have stood in witness and solidarity with the LGBTQ community as marriage equality continues to be a legislative and legal issue. I hope you have seen recent posts on the SEC website and Facebook page about the actions of Circular Congregational in Charleston and Open Table in Mobile. Currently 19 of our 54 congregations are Open and Affirming Churches and two of our new church starts were planted as Open and Affirming. This Conference and its churches are a witness to the culture around us.

The Southeast Conference has stood as witness to the call in Micah 6:8 to do kindness, love justice, and walk humbly with God. It resulted in the loss of congregations during the civil rights movement as legislation was passed with many UCC clergy and churches as leaders in the fight for justice that has continued with the struggle for civil rights for all. We lost churches when the General Synod adopted a resolution on marriage equality but stood in witness to the sanctity of marriage in all circumstances and continue to lead in that social and legal change within our communities and states.

As we continue to heed our Christian commitment during the season of Lent, I hope you will consider what sins of the world you are willing to witness to so that indeed the realm of God may be on earth as it is in heaven. May you have courage in the struggle and faith in the journey.

Blessings, June

MARCH FORTH FOR LITERACY

Are you participating in service with other UCC congregations with March Forth for Literacy?

The UCC is urging congregations to promote literacy through the Reading Changes Lives initiative, which began this past fall with "Project One Read". Looking for more information for participating in this national hands-on service movement? Click here!

Central UCC, in Atlanta, reports that they are doing this vital advocacy work in its partnership with Montclair Elementary. Through an endowment grant, Central UCC was able to secure each classroom with new, grade level appropriate books for the students to use in class and take home on the weekends. Each teacher got to select his or her own books up to $100.00 per class! Along with the new classroom books, some members of Central consistently tutor at Montclair, providing weekly help to the kids who might be falling behind. This relationship with MES is a wonderful gift and Central is excited to be a part of a national movement for literacy awareness within the UCC!

Have some exciting literacy work to share? Let us know so that we can share this work with others!

Generosity Corner

NEW YEAR - NEW OPPORTUNITIES

March 15 is the deadline for submitting grant applications from the Transforming Churches-Transforming Lives Capital Campaign. The qualifying initiatives and all information about how to apply can be found by clicking here or by going to www.secucc.org, and clicking on the Green Application Link. If your church would like to be considered for a grant, the time is NOW to get your application submitted. Questions can be directed to dspearman@secucc.org.

Special Recognition of Pleasant Hill Community UCC

PHCUCC in Pleasant Hill, Tennessee has been recognized as part of the top 100 churches in the United Church of Christ for giving to One Great Hour of Sharing. Pleasant Hill gave $4,907.23 to OGHS in 2014. This special recognition is given to the churches based upon per capita giving and a minimum of $2,000 in giving. They were the only church from the Southeast Conference to receive this recognition. To see the top 100 churches, click here and go to page 10.

Daylight Savings Time

Make sure that you move your clocks ahead this coming Sunday! Daylight Savings Time begins March 8th at 2am!

Please mark your calendar with the following events!

2015

March 6-7 *PATHWAYS Facilitator/Advisory Committee Retreat, Bufford, GA*

April 18 *MID Committee, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, TN*

April 21 *SEC Board Meeting, Online*

June 11-13 *Pre-event and Southeast Conference Annual Meeting, Piedmont College, Demorest GA*

June 26-30 *General Synod in Cleveland, OH*

August 8 *Commission on Ministry, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, TN*

October 5-7 *Retired Servants Retreat,*

5 for 5 giving from the Southeast Conference in 2014.... How did we do?

United Church of Christ
CORNERSTONE
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Imagine doing something good for the church - and earning a tangible reward for yourself

Not as surprising as it sounds when you invest with the Cornerstone Fund, a unique financial ministry that benefits both the individuals and churches of the UCC. If you're an individual with a minimum of $500 to invest, you can qualify. Or UCC Churches: want to borrow? Cornerstone also has attractive rates. Please check out their website information at http://cornerstonefund.org/

Debbie Spearman, Generosity Coordinator

Blowing Rock Conference Center, NC

October 16-18 *Southern Regional Women's Conference, Sumatanga Retreat Center, Gallant, AL*

2016

July 26-29 *National Youth Event Orlando, FL*

Scholarship Opportunities

Did you know that the UCC provides resources for individuals engaged in theological education? The Southeast Conference provides scholarship funds for students enrolled in theological seminaries and the PATHWAYS regional education program. The national setting of the UCC also provides funds for a variety of students. See what is available by clicking on the links below.

http://www.secucc.org/church-governance/theological-education-scholarship/

http://www.ucc.org/scholarships_application

Upcoming Training Opportunities

"Our Whole Lives" Facilitator Training

Looking to become an OWL facilitator for your congregation? OWL is a comprehensive sex education course for different ages from young children to adult developed by the UCC and the UUA. High Country UCC in Vilas, NC is hosting training on Friday, April 17. Click here for more information.

Retired UCC Servants Retreat
October 5-7, 2015

The Fifth Annual UCC Retired Servants event will be held at Blowing Rock Conference Center Monday-Wednesday, October 5-7, 2015. This event is especially for retired UCC clergy and spouses, retired UCC missionaries and spouses, and for those who have been or are active volunteers in the UCC Partners in Service program who are part of the Southeast Conference and Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ. More details will

World Evangelism Month Prayer Breakfast
Saturday, April 11, 2015
8:30am
First Congregational Christian Church
638 High Street at Union
Montgomory, Alabama

Jesus left His disciples with what must have seemed an insurmountable task: to spread the Good News to all nations. There were no cars. No planes. No trains. No phones. No internet. No Facebook. No tweets were going forth. But despite the lack of easy methods of communication, the disciples did exactly what Jesus commissioned them to do! The fact that we have the Gospel today is proof of both their Commitment and Success. First Congregational Christian Church in Montgomery would like to invite the rest of the UCC to take our turn during the month of April for World Evangelism Month. Want to learn more? Click here for a flyer with more information.

You can like World Evangelism Month on Facebook, by clicking here!

follow. Reservations are made through Blowing Rock Conference Center.

UCC Office Support Staff Network 2015 Annual Conference

To all office support staff:

Plymouth Congregational Church of Ft. Wayne, Indiana and the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the UCC are hosting "Rediscovering The Joy Of Play" at the 2015 Annual Conference of the United Church of Christ Office Support Staff Network (UCCOSSN). This year's annual conference, taking place April 9-11, is being held in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

More information can be found by clicking here.

Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

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A. **SEC Offices** / B. **PATHWAYS** / C. **Capital Campaign**